

Zimbabwean artist designs iconic FM cover

The *Financial Mail* went to print this week with a special issue marking the end of Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe's reign and collaborated with a Zimbabwean artist for the iconic cover.



On Tuesday, while Zimbabweans celebrated in the streets of Harare, Bulawayo and abroad, following on Mugabe's long-awaited resignation, after military intervention to remove him the week before, the magazine focused on the end of Mugabe's 37-year rule and what this means for the country's economy.

"Earlier in the year we collaborated with Conrad Botes on our 'Junk President' and we have been waiting for an opportunity to work with a top artist again," said *Financial Mail* editor Rob Rose. "Last week, following the 'non-coup coup', we spoke to Michele Mathison, the Zimbabwean artist whose work grapples with the kind of socio-economic issues we wanted to focus on in the edition."

Mathison, whose work has been exhibited across the world, including London, Venice and Paris, is best known for his large-scale sculptures. So, a print magazine cover was a new challenge.

Said Mathison, "It was an exciting project. The image of Mugabe has been at the forefront of the lives of most Zimbabweans and I have always been interested in the power of his image. The trick was finding a way that expressed the power of what that image has meant to that country for nearly four decades."

Archived pictures of Mugabe for each year he's been in charge were obtained, sourced mostly from the Tiso Blackstar archives. The montage starts with a Zimbabwean two dollar note from 1980 and ends with a current bond note. "That tells its own story," added Mathison.

"From a young revolutionary who liberated a country to the old man as a dictator presiding over a broken economy and a dispersed nation. It's about a man who lost sight of creating a better life for all Zimbabweans, and focused instead on making a better life for itself. The consequence of that is what we saw this week."

Besides telling the story of what this means on the streets of Zimbabwe, the *Financial Mail* explores what Mugabe's departure means for the country's economy. Can the GDP per capita, which has fallen 30% since 2000, recover; and what can be done to fix the estimated 95% formal sector unemployment? When should foreigners, including South Africans, begin investing again in the country?

The writers include Peta Thornycroft, Harare-based economist Tony Hawkins, Chris Muronzi, Aislinn Laing and Giulietta Talevi.

Those who wish to buy a collectors edition poster of the cover can contact the *Financial Mail* directly.

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